

## THEATRICAL LIFE AND REPERTOIRE OF THE MARIONETTE THEATRE OF ESTERHÁZ<sup>1</sup>

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**SUMMARY.** The marionette operas are closely connected with the Esterházy court of the 18<sup>th</sup> century as well as the work of Joseph Haydn; nevertheless they hold values for the audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. This study presents the history of marionette operas in Esterházy. The focal point of the essay is an analysis of the functioning of the marionette theatre based on date, authors and works. The increasing numbers of marionette operas staged today in Hungary and the on-going explorations of the marionette theatre in Fertőd confirm the relevance of this matter. Since the genre of marionette opera lacks Hungarian academic literature, English and German publications provide the background for this study; archives, illustrated materials and musical resources of that period are further examined as well. With the use of these materials we can have an insight not only into a marionette theatre which was extraordinary in its age but an exceptional repertoire as well, for accomplished composers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had produced works for the marionette theatre of Esterházy.

**Keywords:** Esterházy, marionette operas, history of opera, Joseph Haydn, repertoire

The outstanding centre for the 18<sup>th</sup> century marionette opera performances can be found in Fertőd (once called Esterházy), Hungary. Widely acknowledged librettists and composers produced works for the theatre. For example, Joseph Haydn had composed several marionette operas during the thirty years he had spent serving the Esterházy princes. Because of the high standards of these presentations, they became widely known and acknowledged throughout Europe – even Maria Theresa was captivated by it.

The building of the marionette theatre was used for agricultural purposes in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, its excavation has only begun in recent

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<sup>1</sup> The paper has awarded first price in Musical Studies at the XXX. Jubileumi Országos Tudományos Diákkonferencia (National Student Research Competition of Hungary) The current paper only presents the corpus of that thesis. The supervisor of the paper was Újváriné Illés Mária, the assistant professor of the Faculty of Music at the University of Szeged. The whole article was published in the following: Újváriné Illés Mária (ed.): *A marionettől a jazzig. (From the marionette to the jazz)* Szeged, 2010. 104-154.

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years. Scientific journals give reports of the findings on a regular basis; still, as of today no academic text concerning marionette operas has been produced in Hungarian; only a few paragraphs devoted to describe the genre in papers interested in the history of marionette plays. The increasing number of marionette operas performed in Hungary demonstrates the relevance of this topic. Haydn's *L'infedeltà delusa*, performed with marionettes in the Palace of Arts (Hungary), directed by János Novák, was a great success in 2009.

This essay presents the theatrical life and repertoire of the marionette theatre of Nikolaus Esterházy "the Magnificent", which became known all around Europe. The aim of this study is to draw attention to a part of musical history which closely connects to the work of Joseph Haydn, the Esterházy family and Hungary.

### **Theatrical Life of the Marionette Theatre of Esterház**

#### **Seasons of the Marionette Theatre of Esterház**

There are no definite data on the first performance held in the marionette theatre. Mátyás Horányi cites four documents in his work, *Esterházi vigasságok*, which prove that the marionette theatre opened its doors in 1773 for the first time. (1) The first mention of the marionette theatre in the detailed descriptions of the festivals at Esterház dates to the visit of Maria Theresa in 1773. According to Horányi, we cannot assume that previous accounts, which were quite detailed as well, would leave the description of this extraordinary spectacle out. (2) The first known performance of the marionette theatre, *Philemon und Baucis* dates to 2 September 1773. (3) Michael Ernst, member of the prince's choir asked for a raise in his salary in 1805, in referring to his long years of service, mentions that he stepped into service in 1773 as an alto singer of the marionette theatre. (4) The 11 September 1773 issue of *Pressburger Zeitung* uses the words "freshly built" several times when reporting about the marionette theatre.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Events of 1773**

According to data mentioned above, the first performance at Esterház was held on 2 September 1773 on account of Maria Theresa's visit. The Empress arrived a day too early to the palace. A separate room was prepared for her; its pomp and uniqueness represented by the "muzsikáló szék, az éjjelre rendelt arany készületek" and the beautiful wall carpets that can be seen today as well.<sup>4</sup> Prince Esterházy had planned everything precisely and

<sup>3</sup> Horányi, Mátyás, *Esterházi vigasságok. (Festivities at Esterház)*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1959, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> Varga, Kálmán, *Mária Terézia Esterházán. (Maria Theresa in Esterház)*, Műemlékek Állami Gondnoksága, Budapest, 2001. 38

spent large amounts of money to amuse his guest. The Empress arrived to the palace with Archduchesses Maria Anna and Elisabeth, and Archduke Maximilian as her company. Prince Esterházy held a magnificent reception feast. On the first day they held a banquet, followed by a walk in the gardens and Haydn's opera, the *L'infedeltà delusa*. At the end of the evening, a masquerade ball, which lasted to dawn, was held in the Chinese ballroom of the palace.

Without a doubt, the greatest novelty of the Esterházy court was the marionette theatre. On the second day Prince Nikolaus' choir and orchestra played Haydn's new marionette opera, *Philemon und Baucis* and its prelude, *Der Götterath*. According to the *Rélation des fetes Données*, the performance was creditably natural, and the finesse of the decoration, its elaboration, beauty and wealth was united with the appropriate proportions of the scenery. The scenery of *Philemon und Baucis*<sup>5</sup> was followed by a setting which was made for that specific occasion and was never portrayed in later versions.

One part of the performance must not be left unmentioned: when a church was seen trophy – held by the coat of arms of the Austrian ruling house (Truth, Caution and Grace) – appeared among the stars with glory around it. For the same reason, each marionette figure was wearing Hungarian folk costume and was singing a praising song about their ruler, throwing themselves on the ground.<sup>6</sup>

Only one other marionette opera was displayed in 1773, the *Der Hexenschabbas*, performed in late autumn.<sup>7</sup>

### **Events of 1774**

Not much data remained from 1774. From the bills kept in the Esterházy Archives, we can conclude that there was a performance in November. The bills list 40 sheets of paper, probably used for scores; the bills also imply that 31 "Grenadier-Buben" were needed to stage the play. It was a popular custom at Esterházy for the grenadiers to go on stage after a performance to entertain the audience with military stunts while the sound of cannons and the voice of camp instruments filled the theatre.<sup>8</sup> On these occasions, the sons of court officers were also fond to dress in grenadier uniform. However, there is no indication of what marionette opera did they play in November. We can only assume that it was one of Haydn's works from the previous year.

<sup>5</sup> The scenery featured the Olympos, a night scene, storm, forest, rural landscape, the inside of the palace and the park of Eszterháza.

<sup>6</sup> *Rélation des fetes données a sa Majesté L'Imperatrice, par S.A.M. le Prince d'Esterhazy, dans son Chateau d'Esterhaz*. Le 1. et 2. 7-ber. Bécs, 1773. [quoted by: Varga, Kálmán, *Mária Terézia Eszterházán*, Műemlékek Állami Gondnoksága, Budapest, 2001, p. 50-52.]

<sup>7</sup> Landon, H. C. Robbins, *Haydn's Marionette Operas and the Repertoire of the Marionette Theatre at Esterházy Castle*. In: Singer, H. – Füssl, K. – Landon, H. C. R., *The Haydn Yearbook*, Universal Edition, Theodore Presser Co., Wien, 1962, p. 111–199, 174.

<sup>8</sup> Horányi: *Eszterházi vigasságok*, 1959, p. 62.

### **Events of 1775**

On 13 May 1775 Prince Eszterházy addressed a letter to his Chief Steward, Rahier, instructing him to contact Haydn in order to start the preparations for a performance to surprise his wife with. The prince also asks Rahier to keep the preparations a secret in front of his wife.<sup>9</sup> The letter was written in Vienna, which enables us to conclude that theatrical and musical life in the absence of the prince didn't cease in the Esterházy court, they were certainly preparing for the summer plays. Robbins Landon dates the performance of an unknown marionette opera in Kismarton to 20 May, the night before the birthday of Prince Esterházy. With the information the letter provides us we can assume the surprise performance took place that night. Marionette operas were also performed on 29 April and 7 July, but their titles are unknown. On 29 July the theatrical ensemble held a rehearsal in the theatre, most likely in preparation for the performance of *Alceste*<sup>10</sup> in August.

The end of the summer brought feverish preparations; Archduke Ferdinand arrived on the night of 28 August with his company and the *Esterházy vigasságok*, held in their honour, astounded every guest again. The grandiose feasts, theatrical performances gave space for the marionette as well, this time in an unusual form though. On the third day of the visit the guests took a coach ride in the park, where – as Nicolaus had planned – they unexpectedly reached a clearing where a colourful village fair awaited them. In this picturesque cavalcade, comedians, jesters and fair criers entertained the lords, who were astonished by the folk music and dance. They erected a Pulcinella-stage amongst the shacks. Bienfait, the stage director of Esterházy's marionette theatre entertained the audience with his marionette show. The amusement continued with the performance of *Alceste*, followed by fireworks, dinner and a masquerade ball. The third day's closing celebrations are a perfect example of the role of Austrian rococo taste and the rural idyll in the Esterházy court. Their contemporaries often recalled the time when, following a cannon blast, two thousand people, dressed in Hungarian and Croatian folk clothes swarmed the well-lit palace gardens. The entertainment lasted until morning and the court was filled with folk music and dancing people. Nikolaus Esterházy "the Magnificent" never organized such immense festival again, but from this point on theatrical life became more orderly in Esterház.

<sup>9</sup> Valkó, Arisztid, *Haydn magyarországi működése a levéltári akták tükrében. (Haydn works in Hungary at the reflection of archives datas)* In: Szabolcsi, Bence – Bartha, Dénes, *Zenetudományi Tanulmányok VIII. (Musicology Studies VIII.)*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1960, p. 577.

<sup>10</sup> The *Alceste* was originally an Italian opera; its manuscript was translated and revised by Joseph Karl von Pauersback, its music was made by Carlos Ordonez.

### Events of 1776

1776 was a turning point in the theatrical life of Esterházy. Prince Nikolaus' singers performed at least five operas that year, not limited to Haydn's work. 6-8 librettos were written for the court each year. These facts imply that the prince paid more attention to operas from 1776 and established a continuous season. The marionette theatre had been operating since 1773 continuously<sup>11</sup> however, after 1776 sources gave more detailed descriptions of the repertoire of the theatre. The Gotha Theatrical Almanac gave report of nine marionette operas in its issue of 1777.<sup>12</sup> Though scientists often question its dependability, the reported programme almost matches the findings of Robbins Landon. Based on Landon's reconstructed repertoire list, 1777's first known marionette operas were held in March, when *Didone abbandonata* and *Demofonte* were performed. Ignaz Pleyel's marionette opera, *Die Fee Urgele* was staged in December. Throughout the year they probably performed *Philemon und Baucis* and *Der Hexenschabbas* again. It is questionable though, whether *Die Feuersbrunst* – also called *Das Abgebrannte Haus* – was first performed in 1776 or in 1777. Robbins Landon quotes a bill from 25 October<sup>13</sup>, with the help of which it can be stated that three plays were performed in the theatre building that year.

### Events of 1777

Data on the repertoire of this year is incomplete, but due to a guest performance additional information can be found about the marionette ensemble.

On 8 July 1777 Maria Teresa welcomed Clemens Wenzel, Prince Elector of Trier, accompanied to Schönbrunn by several influential personnel. To entertain his guests, the Empress asked for Prince Esterházy's opera and marionette ensemble. According to Wiener Diarium, "the Esterházy *Bande* did a *Spektakel* on 9 July in the palace of Schönbrunn. On 11 July the orchestra played tafelmusik (German origin, music played at feasts or banquets – transl.) in the presence of the queen and on 14<sup>th</sup> they performed a *prächtiges Schauspiel*."<sup>14</sup> *Spektakel* probably refers to a marionette opera, but researchers do not agree which one. According to Carl Ferdinand Pohl, the *Didone*

<sup>11</sup> Karl Ernst refers to this in his previously mentioned appeal, stating that he had worked continuously from 1773 to 1776.

<sup>12</sup> The following performances were staged: *Alceste*, *Dido*, *Genovevens Erster Theil*, *Genvevens Zweyter Theil*, *Genovevens Dritter Theil*, *Genovevens Vierter Theil*, *Der Hexenschabbas* és a *Philemon und Baucis*.

<sup>13</sup> Landon, H. C. Robbins, *Haydn's Marionette Operas and the Repertoire of the Marionette Theatre at Esterházy Castle*. In: Singer, H. – Füssl, K. – Landon, H. C. R., *The Haydn Yearbook*, Universal Edition, Theodore Presser Co., Wien, 1962, p. 111–199, 193.

<sup>14</sup> Horányi, *Eszterházi vigasságok*, 1959, p. 111.

*abbandonata*<sup>15</sup> was performed in Schönbrunn. Mátyás Horányi agrees with it, confirming this with a quote from the issue of Gotha Almanac of 1778, which refers to *Dido*: “Last year a new performance cost 6000 forints and was so magnificent that even the Empress wanted to see it. Therefore they have built a stage in Schönbrunn and brought the marionettes and the scenery to Vienna.”<sup>16</sup> However Dénes Bartha and László Somfai state that the play in question could have been Haydn’s *Genovevens Vierter Theil*<sup>17</sup>, whose premiere was held in April at Esterház. Then again, according to Robbins Landon neither plays were in the programme of Schönbrunn in 1777. He declares with absolute certainty that the play in Schönbrunn was Ordoñez’s *Alceste* and its libretto was written by Pauersbach. He confirms his conclusion with a familiar quote from the *Beschreibung*<sup>18</sup>: “Not only comedies were performed in the theatre, but opera seria as well, for example when the late Maria Theresa applauded the *Alceste*”. In accordance with this, the Empress could not have seen the *Alceste* during her stay at Esterház, since it was only performed in 1775 when Archduke Ferdinand visited the palace. A bill from 11 July 1777 seems to confirm this theory – the bill was given for 12 red atlas bounded copies of the *Alceste*. The stylish binding and the proximity of dates indicate that it was not just a coincidence.<sup>19</sup> Another important document – in connection with the performance at Schönbrunn – can be found in the Esterházy Archives. On 8 July 1777 the court requested 33 blue atlas bounded copies of Haydn’s marionette opera, the *Der Hexenshabbas* from the publisher Trattner in Vienna. It is possible that on 24 July Maria Theresa’s guest had seen this play as well. Some documents recorded that part of the Esterházy ensemble remained in the Prince’s court and staged performances meanwhile. It is also possible that Haydn was not present at Schönbrunn, for the performance was directed by Pauersbach, stage director of the Esterházy marionette theatre.

On 3 August 1777 Esterház hosted another illustrious event when Prince Esterházy’s younger son, Miklós married Maria Anna Franziska Weissenwolf. Two shows were given in honour of the couple. Haydn’s opera, *Il Mondo della Luna* was the centre of attention, but the peak of the event was the marionette opera, *Genovevens Vierter Theil*.

<sup>15</sup> Pohl, Karl Ferdinand, *Joseph Haydn*, A. Sasso, Berlin, 1875-1927. [quoted by: Minniear, John Mohr, *Marionette Opera: It’s History and Literature*, North-Texas State University, Ph. D., Denton, Texas, 1971, p. 170.]

<sup>16</sup> Horányi: *Esterházi vigasságok*, 1959, p. 111.

<sup>17</sup> Bartha, Dénes – Somfai, László Révész, Dorrit: *Haydn als Opernkapellmeister (Haydn as opera director)*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1960, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup> Beschreibung de Hochfürstlichen Schlosses Esterháß im Königreiche Ungern, Pressburg, 1784. [quoted by: Landon, *Haydn’s Marionette*, Operas, 1962, p. 113.]

<sup>19</sup> Landon, *Haydn’s Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 113-114.

As it was customary in previous years, replays of previously staged marionette operas were also presented in 1777, but no other written evidence remains of that year's performances.

### **Events of 1778**

1778 was the first year in the history of the Theatre of Esterházy when the season lasted from January to December. A priceless description of every staged opera, marionette opera and play as well as a list of every concert can be found in the Esterházy Archives in the National Archives of Hungary.<sup>20</sup> According to this document, operas were performed twice a week – Thursday and Sunday – while dramas and concerts took place the other days. The agenda names Haydn's marionette opera, *Die Feuersbrunst* as the first performance of the year – 4 April –, but the description has no reference to the genre, which may mean that Grossman's play – under the same title – was the one presented. A new marionette opera was introduced on 16 May, the *Das Ländliche Hochzeitsfest*. Its libretto had been written by Pauersbach, which was the last marionette opera by him created at Esterházy. The play was staged again in the marionette theatre on 19 May, 2 June and 14 July as well. Possibly the last marionette opera of the year was the renewed version of Haydn's *Didone abbandonata* on 15 September.

Joseph Karl von Pauersbach, the stage director of the marionette theatre left the Esterházy court at the end of 1778. His wife's poor reception at Esterházy and Vienna may have had an influence on him accepting an offer from the Emperor of Russia.<sup>21</sup> There is only little data on how Pauersbach fared later, but some letters give away information about him leaving the Emperor's court, for they had been addressed from Regensburg between 1784 and 1785 and from Nurnberg between 1787 and 1789. On 27 February 1789 – advised by his doctor – he asked for mellow from Prince Esterházy. This was his last letter. The general belief is that the decline of interest towards marionette operas at Esterházy was due to the absence of Pauersbach. This theory seems to be confirmed by the number of marionette operas after 1778; in 1779 only one marionette opera was staged – the *Die bestrafte Rachbegierde*. The last marionette opera performed in Esterházy was *L'assedio di Gibilterra* in 1783. 1778 meant the end of the golden age of the marionette theatre in Esterházy and put an end to the magnificent five year period when the sound of marionette operas – mostly based on Pauersbach's librettos – filled the place.

<sup>20</sup> Ind.: Hg. Esterházy archives, Fasc. 2461. 1-7 letter. [quoted by: Horányi, Mátyás, *Esterházyi vigasságok*, Appendix: *Verzeichnis der Oper*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1959, p. 241-247.]

<sup>21</sup> Maria Anna Tauber arrived to the Esterházy court in 1777 as a soprano. It seems that the court was not pleased with her performance, for her contract had not been renewed. She played the leading role in a one-act opera in the Viennese court, *Grétry Lucile*. As it seems, they were unsatisfied with her performance here as well. Again, her contract was not renewed.

### **Events of 1779**

Prince Esterházy signed a contract in November 1778 with the ensemble of Franz Diwald for the following year. The document declares that besides the everyday comedies they had to appoint reading actors for a marionette play – probably the already mentioned *Die bestrafte Rachbegierde* was staged in August, 1779.

On 18 November 1779 disaster occurred at Esterház. According to reports from *Pressburger Zeitung* and *Wiener Diarium*, fire rose from the top of the opera house and the magnificent auditorium was engulfed in flames in about half an hour. Had it not been for the rain, the fire would have spread to the nearby buildings or even the palace itself. The *Pressburger Zeitung* reported that the fire started out from the Chinese ballroom from which it had spread to the theatre. The court was preparing for the wedding of Count Forgách Antal and Countess Grassalkovich – set to 21 November – so they lit both fireplaces even though those were normally dormant. It was assumed that the overheating of those fireplaces caused the fire. The fact that the destruction of the theatre did not hinder the on-going theatrical life demonstrates Prince Nikolaus Esterházy's character and the growing theatrical enthusiasm of his court. The wedding was held on the intended day and the opera planned for this occasion, *L'amore soldato* was played at the marionette theatre. It took less than three weeks to stage a new opera, Haydn's *L'isola disabitata*, which was probably first performed in the marionette theatre as well. Archives from that year record that on 4 December – not even two weeks after the disaster – the acquisition of materials for the “new construction” had started.<sup>22</sup> The cornerstone was placed one month after the devastation, on 18 December 1779.

### **Events of 1780**

Thanks to its structure, the marionette theatre could temporarily replace the opera house, enabling the theatrical life of Esterház to flow continuously; however, it seems that this had proven to be at the expense of the marionette repertoire. During the season of 1780 – which lasted from Ash Wednesday to 18 December – the stage of the marionette theatre was expanded; new lamps were installed as the previous ones were weak for performances by the opera ensemble. Meanwhile if marionette operas were performed, they were held in the pavilion of the palace gardens. Though the number of records of marionette plays fell, it is certain that marionette operas were still performed.

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<sup>22</sup> Möcsényi, *CD appendix*, Archive datas, a751 Fasc.



Fig. 1



Gaetano Pesci: The South View of the Castle of Esterházy (1779-1780) <sup>23</sup>

The formal opening of the opera house – more luxurious and expensive than the previous one – was held on 15 October, the birthday of Maria Theresa, but it was unsuitable for performances until February 1781.

#### **Events of 1781**

In 1781, the official title of theatre-manager passed from Travaglia to Nunziato Porta, who figures as manager in the subsequent history of the Esterházy operas. Beyond being an exemplary and conscientiously accurate administrator, Porta excelled as a permanent playwright for the Esterházy theatre, and marionette theatre.

#### **Events of 1782**

According to records, Traetta's *Il cavaliere errante* was staged in the marionette theatre with the subtitle: "als Marionettenspiel mit Puppen im Marionettentheater".<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Source: <http://www.nemzetimuemlekek.hu/index.php/epulet/tuendervilag> Downloaded: 11.09.2010.

<sup>24</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 193.

### **Events of 1783**

It is known from sources concerned with the marionette theatre that a rehearsal for *L'assedio di Gibilterra* – its libretto had been written by Nunziato Porta – was held in the morning of 17 May and it was presented in the afternoon. It was re-enacted several times until 20 August.

### **Last Document of the Life of the Marionette Theatre**

Fig. 2



**Layout of the marionette theatre<sup>25</sup> and the building of the theatre nowadays (under excavations)<sup>26</sup>**

The first document in two years had been produced about the life of the marionette theatre in 1785. After 23 May, the Esterházy court signed a contract with the ensemble of Johann Mayer, according to which the ensemble was supposed to perform plays, ballets, German operettas and marionette operas from Easter to the end of 1786. The repertoire of 1786 consisted of eight opera premieres, although none of the pieces were labelled as marionette opera. According to János Harich<sup>27</sup> the newly built opera house supported more than a thousand performances between 1780 and 1790. This was one fourth of all the operas staged at Esterház. It is hard to believe that the number of performances in the marionette theatre was insignificant. Without sufficient data, the life of the marionette theatre in this period is obscured. However, one

<sup>25</sup> Horányi, *Esterházi vigasságok*, 1959, p. 71.

<sup>26</sup> picture was taken by Kata Asztalos, on 21.04.2011.

<sup>27</sup> Harich, János, *Haydn Documenta*, In: *The Haydn Yearbook II.*, Universal Edition, Theodore Presser Co., Wien 1964. 2–44. [quoted by Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 181.]

thing is certain; the death of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy "The Magnificent" on 18 September 1790 brought an end to the theatrical life and the marionette theatre in Esterházy.

## Haydn's Marionette Operas

### Sources

It is hard to avoid confusion when dealing with the marionette operas that are attributed to Joseph Haydn and those that are officially recognized as his, since data on this matter is insufficient. In the 1960s Robbins Landon made a detailed analysis of the bibliographical background of Haydn's marionette operas; his research provides a thorough insight to the theatrical performances at Esterházy. There is only a small amount of data related to the music of the aforementioned pieces; therefore a comprehensive inquiry of librettos, printing processes and theatrical circumstances is essential.

There are ambiguities even in the books of the first bibliographer of Haydn. Griesinger writes: "Haydn's compositions belonging to the period from 1761 until 1790 include... the operas... *Genovefens vierter Theil*, *Philemon und Baucis*, *Dido*, *die bestrafte Rachgier oder das abgebrannte Haus*".<sup>28</sup> Griesinger does not indicate the genre of the plays or which theatre were they written for, therefore this passage may be misleading.

Dies and Carpini include the following operas:

1. Der krumme Teufel
2. Philemon und Baucis, Marionettenoperette 1773
3. Hexenschabbas, Marionettenfest 1773
4. Genovefa, Marionettenoperette 1777
5. Dido, eine parodierte Marionettenoperette 1778<sup>29</sup>

Dies lists several of these operas again, but with supplementary information: "Hexenschabbas, ein Marionettesfest aufgeführt zu Esterházy, 1773, Genovefens 4ter Theil, eine Marionettenoperette, zu Esterházy in Sommer 1777, Dido, eine parodierte Marionettenoperette, zu Esterházy 1778".<sup>30</sup> The two quotations make it clear, that the original librettos or the copies of their front page were available for Dies since his entries correspond with those, whereas Griesinger must have only relied on the *Elssler Verzeichnis*, produced in 1805. Josef Elssler, copyist of Esterházy created the list, but he was never in the

<sup>28</sup> Griesinger, Georg August, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn*, Leipzig, 1810, p. 23. [quoted by: Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 183.]

<sup>29</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 183.

<sup>30</sup> Dies, Albert Christoph, *Biographische Nachrichten von Joseph Haydn*, 1810, p. 70 [quoted by: Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 126.]

service of Haydn.<sup>31</sup> The *Essler-Katalog* existed in two copies, one in Haydn's possession and the other at the Breitkopf und Härtel publishing company. Prince Miklós II bought Haydn's copy thus saving it for the Esterházy Archives. However, both copies perished during bomb attacks in 1943 and 1944. It was almost a miracle that the *Elssler-Katalog* still exists, for not long before the bombing, J.P. Larsen took photographs of it and published it in 1942 in Copenhagen:

Elssler Verzeichnis. Deutsche Marionetten Opern:  
Genovevens 4ter Theil, Philemon und Baucis, Dido, Die bestrafte  
Rachgier oder das Abgebrannte Haus, Der Krumme Teufel.  
In Wien aufgeführt.<sup>32</sup>

It is interesting to note that contemporary sources mentioned marionette operas as German operas. Although the Elssler-Katalog is one of the most important sources in determining Haydn's operas, the list is incomplete. It also contains works that are not written for marionettes. The *Der Krumme Teufel* is Haydn's first opera, which he composed in 1750 in Vienna for the ensemble of Felix Kurz-Bernadon. The score was lost, but the copy of the libretto can still be found in the History Museum of Vienna.

The common belief is that the most important account is the *Entwurf-Katalog* (draft catalogue), which was used as a source for the *Elssler-Katalog* as well. However, it seems that the early bibliographers had forgotten about this document. The catalogue itself had been maintained by Joseph Haydn himself from 1765 and, even if he did it with numerous breaks, continued until the late 1790s. The history of the *Entwurf-Katalog* in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was quite adventurous and it is again due to J.P. Larsen's pictures that this document still exists. The knowledge that was stored in famous Staatsbibliothek was separated into four parts before the bombing of Berlin in 1945. The third part was taken to a monastery in Silesia, where it got into soviet hands. This group contained Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, Bach's Matthäus-Passion, three of Mozart's operas – *Così fan tutte*, *The Magic Flute* and *The Marriage of Figaro* – several symphonies of Haydn, the *Lafedelta premiata*, the *Il Mondo della Luna* and the *Entwurf-Katalog*. Entries on page 18 of the catalogue were written by Haydn himself and deal with marionette operas:

Opera Comique Philemon und Baucis  
Opera Comique Didone abbandonata  
Opera Comique Vom abgebrannt Haus<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Bartha – Somfai – Révész, *Haydn als Opernkapellmeister*, 1960, p. 47.

<sup>32</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 184.

<sup>33</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 185.

Johann Traeg, a publisher in Vienna also played an important part in preserving Haydn's marionette operas. He safeguarded the scores of *Philemon und Baucis* and the *Die Feuerbrunst* for the future generations and listed six Haydn operas in a catalogue in 1799, from which the first three proved to be marionette operas: the *Die Feuersbrunst*, the *Der Götterrath* and *Philemon und Baucis*. The first of the list was believed to be lost; researchers have only found its scores in 1950. There is hope that this wasn't the last time and the still unknown scores of *Der Götterrath* will be found sometime.

It is an undisputed fact that none of the above-mentioned sources hold the complete truth, but each one of them holds a slice of it. Only the manuscripts could provide clear answers, however, most of them had perished in the fire of 1779 at Esterházy. While a lot of invaluable scores had been lost in the fire, Haydn kept some of the marionette operas in his apartment; therefore some earlier plays have survived. Then again, Ernst Ludwig Gerber, a contemporary musician and lexicographer reported that at least five of Haydn's marionette opera-scores had burnt to ashes in the fire.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Der Götterrath (1773)***

Haydn's play was performed in 1773 when Maria Theresa visited the Esterházy court. For a long time scholars believed that the *Philemon und Baucis* was staged, but the inspection of the remaining libretto shed light to the fact that it contains two different operas. The first part – the Vorspiel – was the *Der Götterrath*, followed by *Philemon und Baucis*. The libretto had been made by Philipp Georg Bader, who used Gottlieb Konrad Pfeffel's 1753 creation. The following can be read on the cover of the original libretto: *Philemon und Baucis, or Jupiter's Journey On The Earth. Marionette opera for the first time for Esterházy and its prince. Put on marionette stage in the year 1773. Vienna, by own hand*.<sup>35</sup> The name *Götterrath* first appeared in the records of the *Pressburger Zeitung* on 11 September 1773. Its music had been lost, only the first song remained intact, from which the orchestral apparatus can be reconstructed. The charming hunting music, which was played for the goddess Diana, was planned for two oboes, two horns, timpani and strings. We can deduce the cast from contemporary bills; a bass singer was hired from Sopron for five days, the alto vocalist Griesslerin from Kismarton and the tenor Johann Haydn were requested to Esterházy.<sup>36</sup> Michael Ernst and Eleonora Jäger alto singer also appeared and Joseph Haydn was the conductor. The cast include Jupiter, Apollo, Mars, Mercury, Neptune, Bacchus, Venus, Diana and Ceres.

<sup>34</sup> Gerber, E. L., *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexikon der Tonkünstler*, Leipzig, 1812-14, II, p. 565 [quoted by: Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 186.]

<sup>35</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 168.

<sup>36</sup> Horányi, *Esterházy vigasságok*, 1959, p. 91.

### ***Philemon und Baucis (1773, Original Version)***

The story of this marionette opera originates from Book VIII of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The libretto follows the *Götterath* and is introduced as follows: "Philemon und Baucis Ein kleines Schauspiel mit Gesang"<sup>37</sup> – small drama accompanied by singing. The premiere of 2 September 1773 resulted in enthusiastic reports about its ending. But due to the respect towards Maria Theresa – discussed previously – it was impossible to perform this opera in its existing form. The successful piece – following smaller modifications – returned to the marionette theatre of Esterházy a few years later. The story, the location and the characters remained unaltered: Jupiter, accompanied by Mercury, dressed as travellers appear on the scene; the main characters, Philemon and Baucis, an elderly couple; Aret, their son; Narcissa, Aret's fiancée. The scenes are laid out in a little Frisian village and Philemon's hut.

### ***Philemon und Baucis (second version, around 1776)***

To avoid confusion, I wish to discuss the second version of *Philemon und Baucis*, against the chronological order. The overture and the songs almost exactly match those of the original version. The most dramatic part of the play is the Overture, which provides an ominous sounding with the falling quavers and semiquavers while the wind instruments play long, sustained sounds. The gloomy opening is followed by a lightsome contrapuntist transition. The opening choir is characterized by a lot of repeated semiquavers. Certainly, the greatest modification can be found in the finale. Haydn altered the first ending to a *da capo* choir ("Triumph") and attached a ballet to it. It is generally known that Haydn was not interested in ballet, therefore it is not surprising that the finale of *Philemon und Baucis* was a copy of the ending of Gluck's opera, *Paride et Helena*. Not only the ballet, but the *Intermezzo* labelled as No. 10 was derived from Gluck's work. The fact that Haydn's scope of activities was extended in 1776, which left him less time to compose, definitely played a part in borrowing some parts. The part "Menuetto in tempo comodo", entitled No. 6 was borrowed from Ordoñez's marionette opera, *Alceste*. There was only one new aria, No. 8 "Dir der Unschuld Seeligkeit", sung by Narcissa. This is almost exactly similar to the aria from the second act of *Il Mondo della Luna* which starts with "Se la mia stella". Beside differences in embellishment, articulation, dynamics the musical resembles it. The orchestration shows semblance as well, nevertheless in the lead sheet of *Philemon und Baucis* "fagotto e violoncello" is stated while in the *Il Mondo della Luna* the similar part is played only on bassoon. Another interesting part of the play is that the vocal and instrumental songs are connected by dialogues.

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<sup>37</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 172.



Fig. 3



**Philemon and Baucis (line-engraving from Ovidius: *Metamorphoses*, 1703)<sup>38</sup>**

Although there is no clearly identifiable data on the second performance of *Philemon und Baucis*, our conclusions are based upon the date of creation of the borrowed elements. The premiere of Ordoñez's work – to which Pauersbach had written the libretto – was in the summer of 1775 at Esterházy, therefore the second version of *Philemon* must have been made later. Since *Philemon und Baucis* appears in the Gotha Theatrical Almanac of 1777, we can presume that it had been staged in 1776 or early in 1777. If the assumptions are correct, it means that Haydn borrowed the aria of *Il Mondo della Luna* from *Philemon und Baucis*, since the premiere of the former was in August, 1777.

Since *Philemon und Baucis* is one of the marionette operas which remained intact, a gramophone recording had been made with the lead of Robbins Landon. It is important to note the year 1959, when Siegfried Wehrle's ensemble performed the play with marionettes in Eisenstadt.

<sup>38</sup> Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Baucis\\_and\\_Philemon.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Baucis_and_Philemon.jpg) Downloaded: 14.09.2011.

### ***Der Hexenschabbas* (1773)**

The libretto of *Hexenschabbas* was believed to be lost forever, It was found in the Duchess Anna Amalia Library in Weimar during inventory taking in 2009. Two woodcuts decorate the ten page long libretto.

Fig. 4



The frontpage of the libretto of *Der Hexenschabbas*<sup>39</sup>

The cover page indicates that the piece consists of one act. The libretto itself does not specify the composer or the librettist, not even the place and date of publication. Dies and Carpinì attribute it to Haydn and the bills of the printing of *Der Hexenschabbas* affirm the assumption that its premiere was held in 1773. Since the marionette theatre was opened on the occasion of Maria Theresa's visit, the time of the premiere can be placed to late autumn.

<sup>39</sup> Source: webpage of Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek.  
[http://ora-web.swkk.de/digimo\\_online/digimo.entry?source=digimo.Digitalisat\\_anzeigen&a\\_id=7999](http://ora-web.swkk.de/digimo_online/digimo.entry?source=digimo.Digitalisat_anzeigen&a_id=7999)  
 Last accessed: 24 October 2010



***Didone Abbandonata (1776)***

*Didone Abbandonata* is another Greek-Roman myth that had been first staged in the marionette theatre of Esterházy. The exact date, March 1776 can be deducted from the copy bills of the orchestral and vocal scores. A bill dated to 31 July 1776 provides more detailed data. It was produced for grenadiers who entertained the audience with acrobatic stunts after the performance. The bill lists ten performances in July.<sup>40</sup> The libretto – librettist Philipp Georg Bader – fortunately survived the ages. Its music was composed by Joseph Haydn, which the *Entwurf-Katalog* confirms, but its lead sheet was lost. The characters of this marionette opera are: High priest of Neptun; Jarbas, African king; Araspes, Jarbas' confidante; Osmidas, Dido's false confidante; stonemasons, Moors, priests, guards, Trojans and Carthaginians.

***Die Feuerbrunst, or Das Abgebrannte Haus (1776/1777)***

The universal belief was that *Die Feuerbrunst* had been destroyed by the fire at Esterházy in 1779. The inaccurate and misleading entries of some sources contributed to the mystery that surrounded this opera for 150 years. It started with the *Essler-Katalog* misnaming it the *Die bestrafte Rachgier oder das abgebrannte Haus* in 1805. It is clear today that these are two completely different plays. The *Die Feuersbrunst* had been revealed as a copy of Johann Traeg's autograph in 1950. It is currently in the property of Yale University Library. It seems that the copyists of Johann Traeg had done a precise job, proven by the fact that Haydn's unique mordent embellishments have been reproduced accurately. However, an analysis of the lead sheet raises some interesting musical questions.

The third movement in the overture of the marionette opera and Haydn's opera *L'infedeltá delusa* correspond with each other. It seems to be logical that Haydn borrowed the part from *L'infedeltá*, since it had been written three years before *Feuersbrunst*. However, the answer is not as simple as this, for Haydn sent overtures – the overture of *L'infedeltá delusa* among them – to Artaria Publishing in 1782. He had revised several of the overtures to make their independent tuning possible.<sup>41</sup> This gives place to the assumption that the third movement, *presto*, only got into the overture in 1782. The assumption is affirmed by the fact that the movement consisting of oboes, horns and strings suits the orchestration and apparatus of *Feuersbrunst* better. In the overture of *L'infedeltá delusa* the first movement uses horns and kettledrums as well, but timpani are not a part of the third movement.

<sup>40</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 212.

<sup>41</sup> Besides many others, he also modified *La vera costanza*, whose overture was originally connected to its first song. For the overture to be capable of standing alone, he altered it to a suit and closed it with a ballet taken from *Il Mondo della Luna*.

The role of kettledrums raises interesting questions about the marionette opera, *Die Feuersbrunt*. It seems unlikely that Haydn composed the kettledrum solos played at the end of the first act and in the second act the way it was noted in Traeg's copy, for they are practically unplayable. Since the autograph which Traeg's company made the copy of was lost, the time and author of these additions cannot be determined.<sup>42</sup>

Early sources often confused the premiere of marionette operas with the performances of the play of 1773 that was called the same. The correspondence of titles of later performances raises further doubts. However, the lead sheet has a characteristic which undoubtedly proves the date of the performance. Namely, that this is the only Haydn opera which uses clarinet parts. Bartha Dénes and Somfai László, in *Haydn als Opernkapellmeister* review the list of the actors who served the Prince Esterházy. From this review, it is clear that only two clarinetists worked for the prince. Anton Griesbacher and Raimund Griesbacher were hired on 1 January 1776 and they left Esterházy in 1778.<sup>43</sup>

The *Die Feuersbrunst* is a Singspiel-like marionette opera. Dialogues connect the musical parts instead of *secco recitativos* and the opera has only one *recitativo accompagnato*. This marionette opera is one of the last Hans Wurst comedies. The humorous, warm-hearted and moving character goes a long way back in German acting. The tolerance and humour of Prince Nikolaus Esterházy reveals itself by the fact that he welcomed Hans Wurst, who acquired fame in urban comedies and in this play entertained his audience with – wearing in several different disguises – attempts to seduce his beloved Colombina from Leander, the urban nobleman. The main character speaks a Viennese accent which enhances the marionette opera's folk aspect. Odoardo, Colombina's father, who is a peasant who became rich, uses a mix of the Viennese dialect and the German literary language. The well-educated Colombina and every prestigious character – including Leander – speak northern literary German. The play uses the music as well as the language to differentiate between classes. Colombina's part is elegant, delicate, while Hans Wurst's tunes are similar to folk music, melodious and independent of the popular Italian-style opera.

The opera reaches its musical and dramaturgical peak in the first act, when Odoardo's house – as in the title – burns down. The disaster is followed by a choir. The legendary characters of German *marchen komödie* appear in the play, such as dragons and ghosts, but it doesn't lose its folk-like, direct features. With the end of the marionette opera drawing near, a dragon appears on stage, accompanied by ominous d-moll music (Drachenmusik). Obviously, the opera has a happy ending; Colombina and Hans Wurst find love in each other's arms. Their last duet is made unforgettable by the simple majesty of Haydn's music.

<sup>42</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 153.

<sup>43</sup> Bartha – Somfai – Révész, *Haydn als Opernkapellmeister*, 1960, p. 172.

***Genovevens Vierter Theil (1777)***

The three-act marionette opera is fourth of a series which are based upon German legends. There is a thematic connection between individual pieces, but only the fourth play can be attributed to Haydn. We have discussed previously that this opera was recorded in 1805 in the *Elssler-Katalog* among German marionette operas. However, some extraordinary questions arise. The composers name is not indicated on the libretto – which does not eliminate the possibility that Haydn had composed it, since this was the case with *Philemon und Baucis* as well. Furthermore, the *Entwurf-Katalog* mentions the play twice; first under letter “G” as Pauersbach’s libretto, then as the 8th entry on the last page lists it as a marionette opera from different authors. These make it difficult to identify the opera. It must be noted that by 1805 when Haydn compiled his catalogue, he was becoming forgetful and often mixed up dates and neglected important plays. It is crucial to note that Haydn left out the opera from the list of his own works, but mentioned it twice where he is concerned with the work of others; once at a librettist and once where he is interested in works composed by others. Robbins Landon provides the following explanation for this phenomenon: “We believe that Haydn “had something to do” with the play and composed some parts of it; however, his most important role was to gather data and create a compilation. Thus we believe it justified to list it under the authentic marionette operas, but not as an entirely genuine work.”<sup>44</sup>

***Die Rachbegierde, or Rachgier (1779)***

Although in music history the *Die Rachbegierde* was often confused with the marionette opera, *Die Feuersbrunst*, with the discovery of its libretto in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it became evident that the two plays are not the same. The monogram on the front page of the libretto reinforces the belief that it was written by Philip Georg Bader. Since most of the contemporary sources refer to it as Haydn’s marionette opera, we assume that it was his creation, even though the composer’s name is not indicated on it.

The theme of the marionette is magical, the characters are the inhabitants of Utopia, and what is more, an elfish fairy appears on stage. The libretto provides accounts of the scenery as well; it reveals information about the scenic tableau/scenic design, which had a tall building, an audience room, a shabby, but sunny room, a dark forest, a saloon, a palace garden with triumphal arches, a magnificent dining room, a garden with a perspective on the calm sea and a forest of light with fireworks.

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<sup>44</sup> Landon, *Haydn’s Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 183.

### Other Authors' Marionette Operas Performed at Esterház

Since records of the programme of the marionette theatre are incomplete, no conclusions can be drawn on the ratio of Haydn's and other authors' works. As was with the opera house, presumably the marionette theatre also staged only Haydn's works in its early years. However, in the year 1776 five works of other authors are listed in the programme besides four Haydn creations. Assuming that Haydn's catalogue – the *Entwurf-Katalog* – lists his entire marionette operas, leads to the conclusion that the amount of other works that had been staged in the marionette theatre was greater.

#### ***Alceste* (1775)**

Composed by Carlos Ordoñez, libretto written by Joseph Karl von Pauersbach, based on Calsabigi's work. The marionette opera, *Alceste* was staged in 1775 in honour of Archduke Ferdinand and his wife, Maria Beatrice. The ensemble of Esterház performed it in front of Maria Theresa in Schönbrunn in July 1777. The play consists of three acts and on the front page of its libretto the author labels it as a *sung tragicomedy*. Ordoñez, who once held high office in the court and admired throughout the empire is now seldom remembered. The fact that Haydn used one of his instrumental movements for the marionette opera *Philemon und Baucis* commemorates Ordonez's genius. That the score of *Alceste* has no correction of Haydn is an interesting detail. Whenever works of other authors had been staged in the Esterházy court, Haydn substantially altered the piece. Haydn often made changes to the lead sheets and leading parts, composed additional wind instrument parts, quickened the tempo or cut it short when he found it necessary. The obvious reason why Haydn left the music of the *Alceste* untouched is that Ordoñez – who used to visit Esterház often – conducted the performance himself.

#### ***Demofonte* (1776)**

Not much information remained of *Demofonte* for the future generations, thus it is hard to determine if it was a drama or a marionette opera. Carl Ferdinand Pohl lists the *Demofonte* as one of Pauersbach's works presented at Esterház.<sup>45</sup> The only traceable information is that it had been presented in March 1776, but there is no information to be found on the printing of lead sheets scores and librettos or the binding of any of them.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Pohl, Karl Ferdinand, *Joseph Haydn*, A. Sasso, Berlin, 1875-1927. II. 9. [quoted by: Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 216.]

<sup>46</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 190.

***Genovevens Erster Theil, Genovevens Zweiter Theil, Genovevens Dritter Theil (1776, 1777)***

In the accounts of the season of 1776, Almanac of Gotha mentions three Pauersbach German operas with the above-mentioned names.<sup>47</sup> As with the most contemporary sources, German opera most likely stood for marionette opera. The scores and librettos had been lost, however the bills of printing scores and lead sheets can still be found in the Esterházy Archives. The bill made for Johan Schellinger for printing the *Erster Theil* and the *Zweiter Theil* is dated to February 1776. Another bill to Anton Franz for printing *Dritter Theil* in 1776 can also be found.<sup>48</sup>

***Die Fee Urgele (1776)***

Ignaz Joseph Pleyel was one of Haydn's most promising composition pupil from 1772 until 1776, the most popular period for the marionette theatre. During this time, Pleyel's music was remarkably similar to his master's, in overall style as well as in detail. The libretto was presumably written by Pauersbach. The theme is based on a Chaucer story which was later used by Voltair in his *Ca qui plait aus Dames (What pleases the ladies)*. The orchestral apparatus consists of flute, two oboes, two horns a kettle-drum and strings. The choir plays an important role beside soloists.

***Das Ländliche Hochzeitfest (1778)***

Pauersbach's last marionette opera, *Das Ländliche Hochzeitfest*, was premiered on May 15, 1776, with repetitions in May and June. In the libretto collection of Haydn, the fourteenth entry, Haydn lists the opera by „Burksteiner“. Joseph Purgsteiner was a violonist and viola player in Haydn's orchestra from 1766 to 1790.

***L'assedio di Gibilterra (1783)***

Marionette operas in Italian were considered unusual in the Esterházy court. Existing sources list only two marionette operas that were performed in Italian – the *Didone abbandonata* and the *L'assedio di Gibilterra* –, the rest of them were in German. The premiere of *L'assedio di Gibilterra* was held on 17 May 1783. The play was staged only after several months of rehearsals and was one of the most complicated marionette operas performed at Esterházy. According to extant bills it required an immense number of extras and they used

<sup>47</sup> Gotha Theater-Kalender, 1776, p. 184 [quoted by: Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 191.]

<sup>48</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 201.

a huge amount of gunpowder for battle scenes.<sup>49</sup> Its scores have been lost and the only copy of the libretto can be found in the National Széchényi Library, Budapest, but not even these confirm the name of the composer and the librettist. Mátyás Horányi, in *Eszterházi vigasságok* suggests that its text had been written by Nunziato Porta, the stage director of the theatre then.<sup>50</sup> Haydn lists it without a composer in his catalogue, but on an occasion mentions Pietro Guglielmire as the author.<sup>51</sup>

### Afterword

During the research I have aimed at giving an extensive representation of the marionette operas and the programme of each season at Esterház. I agree with the opinion of Möcsényi Mihály<sup>52</sup> and believe that marionette operas deserve a place in the canon of classical music. It is my firm belief that like Haydn's well-known operas, the existing marionette operas are capable of proving that while they are an integral part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Esterházy court, they transmit values for the audience of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well.

Translated by Németh Péter

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<sup>49</sup> Minniear, *Marionette Opera*, 1971, p. 217.

<sup>50</sup> Horányi, *Eszterházi vigasságok*, 1959, p. 144.

<sup>51</sup> Landon, *Haydn's Marionette Operas*, 1962, p. 192.

<sup>52</sup> It would be theatrically magnificent to perform Haydn's marionette operas in Pauersbach's calibre on a stage reflecting the original one." In: Möcsényi, *CD-appendix*, List of pictures. c102.

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